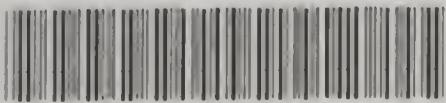


PS 3503

.U785 P6

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00002901432







POEMS

BY

FRANCES LOUISA BUSHNELL

"



PRIVATELY PRINTED

1900

P53503
4785 P6



4774
10



NOTE

Through the courtesy of The Century Co., Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons and The Independent, these fugitive poems, originally published in their respective magazines, can now be offered to the friends of my sister, Frances Louisa Bushnell. M. B. C.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FRANCES LOUISA BUSHNELL	v
I WORLD MUSIC	1
II CHANGED	3
III IN THE DARK	5
IV UNFULFILLMENT	7
V OUT OF SEASON	8
VI OUT OF THE OLD, THE NEW	10
VII THE MOUNTAIN'S MEADOW	11
VIII OUTSIDE	13
IX MIDSUMMER	16
X ONCE UPON A TIME	18
XI THE CHILD'S STAR	20
XII THE YEAR'S COLORS	22
XIII ABSENCE	24
XIV PEACE AS A RIVER	26
XV THE PILGRIM'S REVERY	29
XVI TWILIGHT	31
XVII THE RIFT OF GOLD	33
XVIII NEW YEAR'S EVE	34
XIX MARGARET	36
XX WITHOUT A WORD	40
XXI IN DISGUISE	42

	PAGE
XXII THE GAIN OF LOSS	44
XXIII THE NEW DAY	46
XXIV TWO IN ONE :	
I VESPER	48
II REVEILLE	49
XXV THE NIGHT BLOSSOM	50
XXVI A MAY SONG	51
XXVII HOMEWARD	52
XXVIII SPRING IN THE HEART	54
XXIX JUNE	56
XXX AUTUMN VOICES :	
I THE LITTLE MAID'S SONG	57
II LATE DAYS	59
XXXI THE YEAR'S GOAL	61
XXXII THE WATCHER'S CAROL	63
XXXIII FROM MORN TO EVE, A CHILD'S HYMN	65
XXXIV THE SHADOW	66
XXXV HIDDEN JOY	68
XXXVI RELENTING	69
XXXVII TWO SONGS, TRANS. FROM HEINRICH HEINE	71
XXXVIII THE CHRISTMAS DOOR	73
XXXIX HORIZONS	75
XL THE GOLDEN PRIME	77
XLI DELAY	79
XLII A SURMISE	80

FRANCES LOUISA BUSHNELL

THIS collection of the occasional poems of Frances Louisa Bushnell gives the fitting opportunity for a word upon the character and work of one who was long prominent in the intellectual and social life of Hartford. The place she occupied cannot be filled, but while to those who knew her well her loss is irreparable, her memory will always have in it something of inspiration.

Miss Bushnell had intellectual capacities, which would have given her a considerable place in literature if her ambition had equalled her ability, but she shrank from notoriety and seemed quite content to exercise her wit and her singular powers in the immediate circle in which she was thrown. She was a true poet; she wrote, or at least published, a very small amount of verse, yet this was of a pure and high quality. She had the delicacy of fancy and the sudden gleam of imaginative insight into the world about her that, if exercised to any extent, would have given her a high position among poets. From her father she inherited great verbal facility; words to him were things so vital that they were able to express the most subtle thought, and this power of expression, which is rare and goes only with the power of thinking clearly, always characterized Miss Bushnell's language, spoken or written. It was an intellectual gift with Dr.

Bushnell, and perhaps to a lesser degree with his daughter, but it seemed to have a spiritual quality besides.

She not only resembled her father in this respect, but also in the fact that she was accustomed to think for herself. One meets only now and then one whose opinion on any book or person or event excites any interest, for the reason that the opinion is usually borrowed from somebody else, and in these days commonly from the newspapers. Miss Bushnell thought out things for herself, and consequently whatever she said had the merit of originality and individuality; and, after all, whatever of value anyone's talk or writing has, apart from its being a matter of information, depends upon the personal quality.

Another trait of Miss Bushnell was her quickness of mind. I have known but two or three other persons whose mental process was so rapid, whose perceptions were so keen, and whose power of assimilation was so ready. In conversation she seemed to apprehend what her companion was expressing by a sort of intuition, and to grasp the whole before the sentence was finished, so that her reply always came with lightning-like rapidity. This gave her tremendous power of repartee, and a directness and finish to her wit that was very remarkable. Miss Bushnell also had a very just mind. I speak of this rather as an intellectual than a moral quality, for it made her see things as they are, and real perspicacity is justness. Added to this purely intellectual quality she had also the sympathetic gift of humor, developed rather highly in the direction of ability to see the incongruous and ridiculous side of things; a power which gave great keenness to her remarks, but always ended in merriment

rather than in ridicule. This means to say that her critical faculty was highly developed. She had high standards in literature as well as elsewhere, was exceedingly fastidious in her tastes, and this may partially account for the fact that she wrote so little poetry, for she would be her own severest critic in this way.

In Dr. Bushnell the notable quality was the union of intellectual and spiritual perception. This Miss Bushnell inherited, but she added to it something of the charm of her sex, the alertness, vivacity and gracefulness of mind, which made her seem to those who knew her best almost like one of Shelley's ethereal creations, a being compounded of fire and spirit. This ethereal quality, however, involved no instability, for with this lightness and grace went also great precision and justness, and a will power that was very pronounced in regard to conduct as well as control of her faculties. Her rare common-sense was also a saving quality in her intellectual brilliancy. She never surrendered her reason and could see in religion as well as in life what is essential, and what is extraneous or accidental or merely the creation of human superstition. Her spiritual perceptions were as clear as her intellectual, and she never doubted either the justice of God or the absolute love made manifest in the Redeemer of the world. I mention this because it is not always that so much humor and wit and gayety and intellectual keenness are accompanied by such high spiritual insight and real humility of spirit.

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

WORLD MUSIC

JUBILANT the music through the fields a-ringing,—
 Carol, warble, whistle, pipe,—endless ways of singing ;
 Oriole, bobolink, melody of thrushes,
 Rustling trees, hum of bees, sudden little hushes,
 Broken suddenly again,—
 Carol, whistle, rustle, humming,
 In reiterate refrain,
 Thither, hither, going, coming,
 While the streamlets' softer voices mingle murmurously
 together ;
 Gurgle, whisper, lapses, splashes,—praise of love and
 summer weather.

Hark! A music finer on the air is blowing,—
 Throbs of infinite content, sounds of things a-growing,
 Secret sounds, flit of bird under leafy cover,
 Odors shy floating by, clouds blown swiftly over,
 Kisses of the crimson roses,
 Crossings of the lily-lances,
 Stirrings when a bud uncloses,
 Tripping sun and shadow dances,
 Murmur of aërial tides, stealthy zephyrs gliding,
 And a thousand nameless things sweeter for their hiding.

World Music

Ah! a music more than these floweth on forever,
In and out, yet all beyond our tracing or endeavor,
Far tho' clear, strange tho' near, sweet with a pro-
founder sweetness,
Mystical, rhythmical, weaving all into completeness,
For its wide, harmonious measures
Not one earthly note let fall;
Sorrows, raptures, pains and pleasures,
All in it, and it in all.

Of earth's music the ennobler, of its discord the refiner,
Pipe of Pan was once its naming, now it hath a name
diviner.

II

CHANGED

FAIR is the night, ay, fair and deep ;
The moonlight drowns the vale ;
My eyes are heavy, but not with sleep,
And the night-moth droops her sail.

There's not so much as a sigh in the air ;
The stars are ghostly and few ;
And silver-pale are the meadows, where
So coldly drops the dew.

But the haunting shadows are never still,
They wander all night alone,
And the sleepless insects drone and shrill
In a lonely monotone.

Ah! long ago was a summer night
Like this, and yet other far,
For the moonlight flowed, and the air hung light,
And happy was every star.

The dew that night was a blissful balm,
And seemed on the heart to fall ;
The calm was an overflowing calm,
And love was the life of all.

Changed

Then piping choirs shrilled high, as now ;
But hushed is the sylvan flute
Of the nightingale that dreamed on the bough,
And a tenderer music is mute.

'Tis the same save that, and yet all is strange,
As the soul of the night were fled ;
Yes, I look and look, but can see no change,
Except that my world is dead.

III

IN THE DARK

RESTLESS, to-night, and ill at ease,
And finding every place too strait,
I leave the porch shut in with trees,
And wander through the garden-gate.

So dark at first, I have to feel
My way before me with my hands ;
But soul-like fragrances reveal
My virgin Daphne, where she stands.

Her stars of blossom breathe aloft
Her worship to the stars above ;
In wavering pulsations soft,
Climbs the sweet incense of her love ;

Those far, celestial eyes can dart
Their glances down through leafy bars ;
The spark that burns within her heart
Was dropped, in answer, from the stars.

In the Dark

She does not find the space too small,
The night too dark, for sweetest bloom ;
Content within the garden wall,
Since upward there is always room.

Her spotless heart, through all the night,
Holds safe its little vestal spark.
O blessed, if the soul be white,
To breathe and blossom in the dark !

IV

UNFULFILLMENT

AH, June is here, but where is May?—
That lovely, shadowy thing,
Fair promiser of fairer day,
That made my fancy stretch her wing,
In hope-begetting spring.

The spaces vague, the luminous veil,
The drift of bloom and scent,
Those dreamy longings setting sail,
That knew not, asked not, where they went,—
Ah! was this all they meant,—

This day that lets me dream no more,
This bright, unshadowed round?
On some illimitable shore,
The harbor whither those were bound
Lieth, nor yet is found.

OUT OF SEASON

A STRANGE thing happened down our way
Last fall,—the apple trees put out
Their pretty blossoms, just like May,
And scattered all their pink about.

It gave my tough old soul a start,
Just as you've seen a warmish breeze
Come loitering out of summer's heart
And rock and fan the gray old trees.

And 'twasn't but a day or two
Before I got another shove,
At hearing that old Samuel Drew
Had gone and got at last in love.

If the old wreck, down off the Cape,
That years ago one night capsized,
Had floated in, in gallant shape,
I should not have been more surprised.

But, dear me! if the apple-trees,
When summer's past, bloom out again
And sweeten every passing breeze,
Why, what can you expect of men?

Out of Season

A few late birds, up there above,
Keep calling down, "There's hope for all,
When gray old hearts grow green with love
And fruit-trees blossom in the fall."

At any rate, one thing is plain:
That it is quite worth while to wait,
Since not to trees nor yet to men
Does Heaven like to say, "Too late."

VI

OUT OF THE OLD, THE NEW

How strange that not in springtime fair,
When gentle winds run to and fro ;
But, trembling in the frosty air,
The New Year blossoms on the snow.

That not in morning's lovely bloom,
With silver chimes and merry din,
But slowly through the midnight gloom
The great bell swings the New Year in.

Ah, life in death ! Ah, gain in loss !
And smiles in eyes that tears bedew ;
Love, with its pain,— Heaven, through a cross,—
'Tis ever thus our years grow new.

VII

THE MOUNTAIN'S MEADOW

MEADOW lying far below me,
Green between the silver birches,
Does the little streamlet know thee,
That thy verdure softly searches ?

Ever where it listeth gliding,
Idling through thy bright expanses ;
Dark behind the alders hiding,
In the noon's delicious trances ;

Through the honeyed clover creeping,
Drinking sweetness without measure ;
'Mid thy reedy grasses sleeping,
Overfull of easy pleasure ;

Knowing all thy sunny spaces,
All thy blossoms breathing sweetly,
All thy cool and hidden places—
Could it know thee more completely ?

Ah ! none ever won by dreaming
Secret such as thine, fair meadow ;
But the mountains, heavenward gleaming,
Touch and know thee with their shadow.

The Mountain's Meadow

They have soared into the wonder
Of the noon with giant daring
To the heat, the storm, the thunder,
Each its mighty forehead baring.

Now, that long endurance over,
In their glorious leisure leaning
Grandly down, they may discover
Something of thy deepest meaning.

Thou art coolness after burning ;
Thou art fullness after bareness ;
Sweet possession, after yearning ;
After storms, an open fairness.

Thou art stillness after striving ;
Crownèd rest, to high endeavor,
After anguish, deep reviving ;
After death, the calm Forever.

VIII

OUTSIDE

Down the dark the snow is whirling,
Driven blindly through the gloom ;
All its white
Is lost to-night,
As some unseen force were hurling,
Sinking it to hidden doom.
And the snow in vain, in vain,
Flutters upward in its pain ;
It will fall to earth and stain.
Impulse, flutter, wavering, fall,
I, alas ! have known them all ;
Dropped my little trembling light,
Lost the lustre of my white,
Find no longer rest or goal
For my tired feet or soul,
In a cloud of blind despair
Turn as gladly here as there.

In yon firelight, brightly gleaming,
Little phantoms, rosy red,
Turn and meet
With dancing feet.
Ah ! the vision sets me dreaming,
Till I wish that I were dead,

Outside

Of a child that years ago
Danced within the heartsome glow,
Light and pure as flake of snow ;
And this pictured shadow-dance
Seems that childhood seen in trance.

Dancers sweet ! you look divine
To these darkened eyes of mine,
And I gaze upon you, even
As an outcast into Heaven ;
So will shadowy splendors fall
Far outside the jasper wall.

Hark ! the vesper-bells are ringing
In the minster's solemn height.

“ Come,” they say,

“ O, come and pray ! ”

Through the great doors slowly swinging,
'Twixt the darkness and the light,
I can see the white-robed choir,
And the candles' chastened fire
Up the arches pale aspire,
And the sculptured angel stand,
Holding out his stainless hand.

Should I to the altar steal,
Kneel where happy maidens kneel,
Like that one with upturned face,
Meeting Heaven's descending grace,
Hands crossed peaceful on her breast,
In a calm of prayerful rest,
Would her peace encircle me ?
Would her freedom set me free ?
No, fair saint, the peace is thine,
And the dark despair is mine.

Outside

Ah! these souls in harbor lying,
Anchored on a sheltered tide,
Only know
Life's even flow;
Little reck of storms wild flying,
Or of waves that beat outside.
Stainless hand but nerveless arm
Cannot snatch a soul from harm,
Or make hearts benumbed grow warm.
Lord, thy purity is strong,
Reaching to the cure of wrong:
Search, yea, rend my heart and soul,
If such sharpness can make whole;
Or, if far too low I stand
For the dealing of thy hand,
Must I then be left outside?
O, my God! Thy heavens are wide!
Send some angel, pure and fleet,
Let him lift me to thy feet,
There abased and dumb to kneel,
Still contented, might I feel
That, in some poor place apart,
I was not outside thy heart.
Something whispers to my fear,
Can it be that thou art near?
Are thy feet here in the snow,
Wounded for me long ago?
Let me clasp them, lying low.
I have found the open door,
And am left outside no more.

IX

MIDSUMMER

THE summer floats on even wing,
Nor sails more far, nor draws more near,
Poised calm between the budding spring
And sweet decadence of the year.

In shadowed fields the cattle stand,
The dreaming river scarcely flows,
The sky hangs cloudless o'er the land,
And nothing comes and nothing goes.

A pause of fullness set between
The sowing and the reaping time ;
What is to be and what has been
Joined each to each in perfect rhyme.

So comes high noon 'twixt morn and eve,
So comes full tide 'twixt ebb and flow,
Or midnight 'twixt the day we leave
And that new day to which we go.

Midsummer

Full, fruitful hours by growing won,
A restful space mid old and new
When all there was to do is done
And nothing yet there is to do.

No days like these, so deeply blest,
That look not backward nor before;
Their large fulfillment, ample rest,
Make life flow wider ever more.

X

ONCE UPON A TIME

ONCE upon a time, life lay before me,
Fresh as a story untold ;
Now so many years have traveled o'er me,
I and my story are old.

Once upon a time my locks fell flowing,
Brown as yours and as bright ;
Now so many winters coming and going
Have left them, you see, snow-white.

Once upon a time I, too, had a lover,
Gallant and full of grace ;
Now do you think, dear, you can discover
Him in Grandpapa's face ?

Once upon a time I thought it living
Only to draw my breath ;
Now I've learned that it means a striving
Sometimes even to death.

Once upon a time I fell to weeping
If but my wish was crossed ;
Now I can trust to a better keeping,
Even if all seem lost.

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time it looked so dreary
Ever to wait and rest ;
Now, at last, I'm a little weary,
Resting awhile seems best,—

Waiting awhile, till the great to-morrow
Over the hilltops climb.
Joy is forever. Thank God, dear, that sorrow
Only is once upon a time.

XI

THE CHILD'S STAR

THE Christmas night fell softly down,
And closed the crimson West;
And lighting on the snow-clad town
Dropped peace upon its breast.

A happy party, homeward bound,
Drove down the lighted street;
Their horses skimmed the ivory ground
With swift and dainty feet.

The tinkling sleigh-bells spurred their pace;
The downy furs were heaped;
And from its nest a little face
With winter roses peeped.

The sparkling crescent in the sky
Swung on its silver rim,
And as the child flew quickly by
It seemed to fly with him.

“O, see that pretty star!” and thus
His growing thought did come:
“Mamma, it's going home with us—
It's going to *its* home!”

The Child's Star

Oh! happy child, your words went far ;
Yes, farther than you guessed ;
And high upon the hornèd star
You hung a fancy blest.

Long, long ago some pilgrims had
The thought that pleases you,
And all the world to-night is glad
Because the thought was true.

And when, dear boy, your fancies sweet
To certainties have grown,
You'll reach the star that leads your feet,
Nor find the fancy flown.

XII

THE YEAR'S COLORS

Rosy, rosy, broke the year,
Ruby red and ruby clear ;
Flushed carnation through the sky ;
Flamed its joys up zenith-high ;
Bloomed above the spotless snows,
Opening, as a splendid rose
In among the lilies blows.
For the snow lay lily-pure
And the snow lay marble-still ;
With a stainless heart, secure
From the passion that would fill
All the earth and all the sky.
Red, red, red, it mantled high !
Red, red, red, it drooped down low !
But it could not stain the snow.

Looking up the crimson height,
Looking down to perfect white,
Flame of sky and calm of snow
Seemed to mingle in the glow.

The Bear's Colors

Kindling hopes and holy fire,
All that draws our spirits higher,
All to which our souls aspire,
Chastened by a will serene,
Fit for waiting, even long,
And a heart all pure and clean,
Angel-pure and angel-strong.
Down the years, blest colors, shine,
Of their glow and calm the sign ;
Promise of a far-off light,
Warm with red and pure with white.

XIII

ABSENCE

THROUGH azure realms of loneliness
Sails the hot sun: no cloudy fleet
Convoys him o'er the trackless waste,
Or cools his path with snowy sleep,
Becalmed upon the tropic deep;
Or scuds, by freshening breezes chased,
Dropping swift shadows down to bless
And make the sunlight doubly sweet.

Earth's upturned face is glad no more,
Expressionless beneath the noon;
The listless winds in covert lie,
Nor hunt in lightsome companies
Through whispering grain and sighing trees;
The sea sends inland no reply
To the dumb yearning of the shore,
But ebbs away in weary swoon.

A bird in yonder thicket sings,—
And if so be his song tells true,
In miles and miles the only bird;
For ne'er such plaintive monotone
Of heart companionless and lone
Was in a summer noontide heard;
Tight folded are his useless wings,
His mate is lost beyond the blue.

Absence

Gone is the nameless charm that binds
The outer world in kinship blest,
The interchange, the light refrain ;
And 'twixt our souls, that once were near,
Lie leagues of stirless atmosphere,
Asleep upon a silent main :
Nothing to-day its heart-mate finds,
Nor any answer to its quest.

One kiss of shadow or of air
The world to lovelier life would stir ;
Or, might I clasp that distant hand,
Then love would grace for me the whole :
So light a touch on hand or soul,
So light a touch on sea or land,
Makes all things one and all things fair.
Wake, wind ! and blow a touch from her !

XIV

PEACE AS A RIVER

WHY ask for joy's tumultuous thrill,
That suffers no increase ?
Better the motions sure and still
Of ever-deepening peace.

Better to dwell with lowly things
And with their growth to grow ;
To feel within those secret springs,
That gather cool and slow.

Born of such stillness, wells the brook,
In leafy closet dim ;
Till the full silence of the nook
O'erflows into a hymn.

The little singer trips along
In musical content ;
But ever gains a fuller song
And learns its own intent.

Gladly it spends its tuneful grace
In hidden minstrelsy ;
Nor asks, as yet, a wider space,
But just to sing and be.

Peace as a River

In simple service thrives its heart ;
It waters flowerets shy,
It feels the spotted fishes dart,
It mirrors bits of sky ;

Till, slipping down by hillside farms,
Its ministries enlarge,
And in the meadows circling arms
It wins a broader marge.

White lilies anchor on its breast,
A boat glides softly through,
And ever deeper grows its rest
The more it has to do.

For in its tasks it knows no haste,
Nor lets the music cease ;
Too free to keep, too calm to waste,
The largesse of its peace ;

But bears it on to outstretched lands
Where thirsty cities wait ;
And then, at length, it understands
The fulness of its fate.

Proud ships upon its bosom ride,
It throbs with busy oars ;
It grows more nobly satisfied,
Between its widening shores ;

Peace as a River

It gathers strength and majesty,
Yet flows with rhythmic ease ;
And the great gladness of the sea
Completes its garnered peace.

Better ? dear Peace, thou art the best !
For where thou hast thy home,
Full grows the service, deep the rest,
And Joy herself shall come !

THE PILGRIM'S REVERY

THE waning moon shines pale and still ;
The winds in russet branches die ;
Day faints upon the darkening hill,
And melts into the days gone by.

The vanished days ! now dim and far,
Yet none so dead they cannot wake
And stir in me, as yon high star
Quivers, deep-visioned, in the lake.

They glimmer down the moon's long beam,
They rustle in the russet tree ;
They fade in twilight's melting dream,
And slide in starlight down to me.

I feel the hush of brooding wings,
The warmth of tender joys far flown,
And little flights and flutterings
Of blessings that were once my own.

But O, most sweet, and O, most sad,
Of all these lost delights that thrill ! —
The blessings that I almost had,
But life can never more fulfill.

The Pilgrim's Revery

And yet 'tis strange, but these are more
My own, to-night, than all beside,—
Glad stars upon a distant shore,
That draw my sails across the tide.

Fade, golden evenings, fade and sink!
Burn, crimson leaves, burn out and fall!
For life is other than we think,
And death the surest life of all.

XVI

TWILIGHT

AWEARY, vague and glimmering lies the land,
Where Twilight, like a nun in vesture gray,
Comes with a flickering taper in her hand,
Whose pale and spiritual ray
Lights face and breast.

Fainter and fainter grows the upward light,
And deeper creeps the darkness round her feet,
While all across the world she leads the night,
And shuts the day that was so sweet
Behind the west.

Alas! for she has left me in the arms
Of night, who holds me in a prison cell:
Begirt with dark and shadowy alarms,
I pray for light, whose sword can fell
These phantom foes!

At last there come faint shinings through the veil,
As if behind it had been born a star;
The dead horizon grows a circlet pale,
And out beyond the world more far
Blossoms a rose.

Twilight

'Tis twilight, with the rose upon her cheek,
In veil and clear adornments of a bride;
Her happy eyes the happy tidings speak,
She throws the portals open wide,
And lo! the sun!

When dark-winged grief o'ershadows me with night
Shall not my soul with hope the day await?
For that which brought the darkness brings the light,
And opens the eternal gate
Toward which I run.

XVII

THE RIFT OF GOLD

DARK clouds the heavenly blue infold,
But on the sunset rifted lie,
And frame, with rim of shining gold,
A width of open sky.

It hangs, an outlook calm and blest ;
A broad, unhindered upward way,
To warmer realms and lands of rest,
Mid waveless floods of day.

We reach far out beyond the rift,
And long to follow or to hold ;
But eastward whirls the ceaseless drift,
To depths of night and cold.

Yet souls fly out and up, so far,
They have no need of earthly light,
Or flame of heaven-enkindled star,
To solace darkest night.

Past sun and stars ; in deeps behind
These trailing clouds and lower cold,
May he who looks forever find
The open rift of gold.

XVIII

NEW YEAR'S EVE

How old our planet looks to-night,
The hoary landscape blind and bare,
The heavy labor of the air,
The dying breath, the dying light !

What if the year were really new,
And this time-weary world of ours,
Made freshly fair as Eden's bowers,
Were newly launched upon the blue ?

What if this wayworn human race,
Clean from its sweat, its dust and grime,
Might cool its steps in morning-prime
And feel the dawn upon its face ?

And what if I among the rest,
New-waking on a sunrise shore,
Might see the opening day before,
With life unblossomed in my breast ?

Ah ! it were but an empty boon
Unless the new arise within ;
Since all renewals that begin
Outside the heart grow old so soon.

New Year's Eve

Forever old is he and blind,
Whose feet pass through some open door
That leads to newer days before,
Yet leave his laggard soul behind.

Oh ! rather may the soul come, too,
When life through gates of change is drawn.
If that but feel the touch of dawn,
Then will the year be really new !

XIX

MARGARET

I

THROUGH the fields with morning wet,
Gaily wandered Margaret,
Not a shadow darkening yet
Eyes new-filled with violet ;
 Just a blithesome lass,
Light of heart and light of tread,
Following where the pathway led,
Spinning out its little thread
 In the meadow-grass.

As she lightly tripped along,
Humming to herself a song
From a heart unstung by wrong—
Gossamer fancies free to throng
 Through her cloudless breast—
Troops of daisies, left and right,
Answering back her fresh delight,
Closer swung their fringes white
 Around their rosy guest.

Margaret

She plucked one idly as she went ;
And half for jest, and half intent,
All her simple lore she spent,
Trying what her fortune meant
 On its snowy ring ;
With the charm each maiden tries,
Ever with a new surprise,
Listening to those soft replies
 That the daisies bring.

First, *he loves me*, whispered low ;
Then, *he loves me not*, and so
Back and forth, and to and fro,
All around the milk-white row,
 The fairy wheel of fate.
Wide the airy leaflets blew,
While her fingers swiftly flew,
Raveling out the slender clew
 To her heart's estate.

Ending thus the little spell,
On *he loves me not* it fell :
But merry as a marriage-bell
Rang her voice : " Dear flower, pray tell,
 Why so cruel art ? "
Careless fancies lightly blow,
Spread their wings, and come and go,
When the door stands open so,
 In the happy heart.

Margaret

II

Twelve long months the year swung round,
All its little buds unbound
Sleeping in the meadow-ground,
All its pretty blossoms found
 Sweetly fresh and true.
Bright was the bloom on hill and dale,
But Margaret's lovely bloom was pale,
And 'neath her eyelid's drooping veil
 Were clouds upon the blue.

A secret thorn within the breast
Closer to her heart she prest ;
And moods of longing and unrest
Drew to the fields all newly drest
 Her half-reluctant feet.
But oh, the soul of all was slain !
And hers was pain's exceeding pain,—
To see the outer charm remain,
 And mock what once was sweet.

The grain was rippling broad and free,
Singing there was on every tree,
Perfumes there were on every lea,
And life was warm and brave, but she
 Felt like a wayside stone.
The joy of birds, the brook that purled,
The tender balm the year unfurled,
All the song and breath of the world
 Left her the more alone.

Margaret

She let the summer bloom drift by,
But on the path her downcast eye
Saw a daisy withering lie,
As it too were fain to die,—
 Nay, the flower was dead!
“Would that all dying were as brief,”
She sighed, in weariness of grief,
And slowly sundering leaf from leaf,
 The little charm she said.

Alas! alas! the ghostly spell!
Still on *he loves me not* it fell!
She dropped the flower in dumb farewell;
For some dead joy, she might not tell,
 Lay hushed within her heart.
Ah! what can idle fancies do,
When once the door is fastened to,
But fold the wings that lightly flew,
 And nevermore depart!

XX

WITHOUT A WORD

IN the light keeping of the air,
Trembles a secret all things tell ;
The very wind that lifts your hair
In lands of heat hath learned it well,
Whispers it soft against your cheek,
Breathes it in passion-laden sigh,
So warm, so nigh,
It has no need a word to speak.

With fluttering hearts the birds outpour
The open secret all day long ;
Now they confess and now implore,
In the strange mystery of song,
Which seems to utter everything,
Yet leaves the sweetest things inferred,
Without a word.
O birds! no wonder that you sing!

Without a Word

And even the silence of earth's breast
Tells it in language still and fine ;
And grown too full to be supprest,
Reaches these flowers up for a sign.
O, for some perfect sign to tell
What words too rudely might declare !
Some voice of air,
Soft as the whisper of the shell !

Yet the dumb heart can tell thee more :
It speaks to thee with every beat ;
And what it urges o'er and o'er,
Words were less daring to entreat.
Yes, when that speaks, is all avowed ;
All that I bade my lips conceal,
That will reveal
Without a word, and speak it loud !

XXI

IN DISGUISE

YOUR face possessed me while we talked ;
It seemed the picture of a heart
In whose fair garden Sorrow walked,
While Joy, poor errant, stood apart,
A suppliant at the gate.

You do not dream that she is near,
So still she waiteth and so shy.
You are not thinking of her, dear ;
Almost you have forgot to sigh
She comes no more of late.

I know, I know, she longs to come,
And lift the latch with quick surprise ;
And yet she standeth strange and dumb,
And looks, behind that still disguise,
As one you never knew.

But if she came with smile and dance,
With banners flying, music gay,
Oh, would you run with answering glance,
Or only turn your head away
From what was not for you ?

In Disguise

I understand ; you need not speak :
The heart that is for Sorrow strong,
For Joy too joyful were too weak ;
She must not come with dance and song,
But lightly as a dove.

'Tis thus she comes, and makes no claim ;
She whispers soft, she kneeleth low,
And wears the while a gentler name.
Oh, hear me breathe it ! Must she go ?
The name she wears is Love.

XXII

THE GAIN OF LOSS

I KNOW a heart that sits upon its throne,
Yet makes its kingdom poorer day by day;
A queen unblest, in that it blesses none,
And far too poor to give itself away.

And one I know hath all its sweetness given,
A flower left empty by the thankless air,
Yet in the losing finds its only heaven,
Fed by the fountains of divine repair.

Who then shall weigh our wealth against our dearth?
Where is the justice fine of sight and touch?
So light the things we dream have dearest worth,
And those we hold for nothings worth so much.

How shall I dare, then, for this joy to pray,
Lest when it come it prove a grievous loss?
Or how implore that grief may pass away,
Lest thus I spurn a flower-bearing cross?

The Gain of Loss

O, blessed tears, that cleanse the eyes for morn!

O, costly gains, wherein our all we lose!

O, rose of peace, so white with many a thorn!

Choose thou, my heart, be strong at last, and choose.

Not yet, not yet! I cannot ask for pain,

And dare not ask the joy that blindeth me;

I cannot choose; my Father, I would fain

Ask thee for that which looks like joy to thee.

XXIII

THE NEW DAY

SILENT has been the night, and O, so long!
With weary moon forever sailing west;
Save that a bird at midnight trilled a song,
A dream of daylight, from his moonlit nest.

The hills lay couched in slumber, range on range,
The earth was floating in a silver web,—
That mystery of calm before a change,
That lull of waters at the lowest ebb.

Some drowsy notes were all the bird could sing,
Soft as the scattered drops of summer dew;
Then, hushed within the quiet of his wing,
He sang no more; but now the dream comes true.

A thrill runs through the spaces of the night,
And flutters on the wavy eastern line;
Beyond the stars dilates a distant light,
The luminous outflow of a day divine.

With slow approach it deepens into bloom,
Faint jasmine yellow, with a flush of rose;
And, brightening till it makes the stars a gloom,
O'er all the long uncertainty it flows.

The New Day

What though the perfect day is yet unborn !

Sweet were the carolled vision of the bird ;
Glad are the tidal colors of the morn,

And heaven is pledged without a single word.

The waves of light are breaking on the shore,

Pulsing in cadence to a mightier flow—

The strong uplift of nobler hopes before,

The great new future rising in the glow.

Above the hills surges the day at last,

The longed-for day, effulgent, high and wide.

Turn, turn, gray earth, and leave the darkened past,

And swing thyself upon the incoming tide !

XXIV

TWO IN ONE

I

VESPER

VANISHING sun, delay, delay,
Linger a little over the past,
Sing, sleepy birds, keep back the day
From whiling away so fast.

Vesper bell ringing slow and sweet,
Ring me the story of days that die ;
Soon shalt thou peal more loud and fleet
The bliss of a day drawn nigh.

Can there be two hearts in my breast?—
One that fast to the old bough clings,
One that flies to the new-made nest
And folds its fluttering wings?

Could not life stand still where it is?
Would that, indeed, I had hearts for two!
But O, if I had, they would both be his,
So what, my heart, can you do?

Two in One

II

REVEILLE

THE stars have all winked themselves out,
And the moon has slipped under the hill;
A swift little wind rushes gaily about,
And will not leave anything still;

And my heart and my pulses all beat,
In time to the throb of the drum,
That calls me quick leaping once more to my feet,
For the jubilant morning has come!

It is for *my* dawn that I care,—
O, not for the day-dawn alone!
Rise, rise, happy sun, for the day must be fair,
That makes her forever my own.

The moon will come up from the hill,
And the stars will all gaze as they shine,
And the winds will all hush, and my heart will stand still,
When she whispers her vow to be mine.

THE NIGHT BLOSSOM

WHILE the twilight deepens on garden walk and bed,
 The flower is slow unfurling its sails of snowy white;
 Freighted with odors, lightly moored by a crimson thread,
 Swaying and floating on the rising tide of night.

In the twilight's soft glimmer
 With a tremulous shimmer
 Swinging to and fro, it shines ethereally bright.

Why then, O, thou sweeter flower, virgin white and fair,
 Deep within thy stainless breast dost fold thyself away?
 Is it that thy tender soul unveiling cannot bear,
 In its pure seclusion feels the sweetness of delay?

In the twilight half hidden
 Let me gaze unforbidden;
 Shine upon me, lily-heart, by evening's silver ray!

Close those searching eyes, bright stars! Moon more
 softly shine!

While my vestal flower lets all her sacred sweetness
 flow,
 To my reverent heart unveils her spirit's radiant shrine;
 Pure within as fair without, its inmost depths are snow.
 Far Heaven of holy brightness!
 Conform me to her whiteness,
 Lest my soul beside her soul too dark and stained
 should show.

XXVI

A MAY SONG

WEAVE high, weave low
Thy veil of blossom-snow,
Yet think not so to blind me, gentle May;
Too idly sweet thy wandering breezes blow —
Oh! much I fear, dear May,
Thou wilt not stay.

I've known, ere now,
A fairer one than thou,
Sweeter than winds that 'mid the violets stray:
My heart was like a nest on flowering bough —
Too like, for neither spray
Nor bird would stay.

Before I knew,
The bough was broken in two,
The blossoms withered and bird flew away:
Since then I clasp no hope that is not true
And strong enough alway
With me to stay.

No longer clings
My heart to dreamful things
That breathe and perish in a blossom's day,
That sing a song or two, then spread their wings.
Oh! well I know, sweet May,
Thou wilt not stay.

XXVII

HOMeward

A GALLOP through the mountain way,
With click, click, click, against the flint,—
Hard following on the flying day,
That backward flings a fiery tint.

The twilight pines stand dense and grim,
And sigh and sigh, "The day is dead;"
The virgin birches, tall and slim,
Wave shadowy arms across the red.

In brooding peace the uplands lie,
Stretched dimly in their evening rest;
As through their lifted calm I fly,
On, onward, to the happy West.

Oh West, heart-red, burn close before!
Pale, dreamy East, float far behind!
No pause, good steed,—a few miles more,
In yonder glow our rest we find.

Urgent, we reach the downward hill,
The village darkens far below,—
Has aught befallen her of ill?
My eager heart leaps down to know.

Homeward

A swift descent along the ridge,
Through shady glooms and breaks of light ;
A cheery clatter on the bridge,
Then up the street where falls the night.

Across the dark a hearth-fire's gleam,
A graceful shadow on the wall ;
'Twas false, thank God, that last night's dream,
That something evil did befall.

From out the door a ruddier shine
Meets vanished daylight's golden trace,
And starry eyes turned up to mine,—
One light in heaven and home and face !

XXVIII

SPRING IN THE HEART

GLAD hopes fly down into my waiting heart
From yonder world of blue,
That lets them through ;
They come as straight and swift as wingèd dart,
But soft and light, I trow,
As bird on bough.

Times there have been when I have all day long
Gazed wearily aloft
For pinion soft ;
Nor caught as much as distant note of song,
Or plume dropped on my hand,
From that far land.

But now the air is gentle with their flight,
While on soft-sailing wing
Glad news they bring ;
And some fly low, and on my heart alight,
And weave a little nest
Within my breast.

It is a simple little song they sing ;
But, such as it may be,
'Tis sweet to me,—
A song of life renewed and blossoming,
Full waters, pastures green,
And days serene.

Spring in the Heart

So it must be they find some verdure here,
Some little branch abloom,
Some brooding room,
Where I had said that all were bare and sere;
Or is it that they see
Where bloom shall be?

For, best of all, they make themselves a place
With spreading of their wings,
The heaven-born things!
Enlarge the heart with motions of their grace,
And waken blossoms there
With tuneful air.

I must not hold them fast, that well I know;
But stretch out wide and free,
Like some green tree.
Fresh tidings bring they when they come and go,
And other wingèd guests
To build new nests.

Go, fly then, little singers, as you will,
And sing your simple song
All roads along;
Light on some wayworn hearts and make them thrill
So softly, it shall seem
Their inmost dream.

XXIX

JUNE

Now the over world the under
 Clasps in its embrace,
And the twain so long asunder
 Closely interlace.
Now the sunlight and the shadow
 Keep an endless tryst ;
Now the sky the upspringing meadow
 Hath o'erleaned and kissed.

To the barren bough the flower
 Fair and graceful clings ;
And the long-deserted bower
 Feels the stir of wings.
Heart of noon and breath of coolness
 Mingle into one ;
All the longing springs with fullness
 Softly overrun.

Hopes outworn with flight incessant
 Now o'ertake their quest ;
To the weary past the present
 Gives its perfect rest.
Only one thing mars the vision,—
 It must vanish soon ;
Faint foreshadow of fruition,
 Fair and fleeting June !

XXX

AUTUMN VOICES

I

THE LITTLE MAID'S SONG

O HAPPY, happy, shining day!
The time to dance and sing and play!
I wish I only knew
Why all the clouds have gone to sleep,
And lie, like flocks of lazy sheep,
Far up there on the blue.

The aster must be glad that nods
So cheery to the golden-rods,—
Wide open is its eye;
And happy is the scarlet vine,
That runs along the dark green pine,
As if to reach the sky.

Autumn Voices

This afternoon, down at the brook,
A bright-eyed squirrel stopped and took
A dozen little drinks ;
Some nuts were lying at my feet,
He looked as if he thought them sweet,
And gave some knowing winks.

Just then a little leaf quite brown
Into the brook came rustling down,
And sailed off like a ship ;
The squirrel gave his tail a whisk,
Then made a funny sideways frisk,
And left me with a skip.

There's red and yellow, green and pink,
And purple too,— it makes me think
Of Joseph's little coat ;
The wood is in a rainbow drest ;
The hills are like a robin's breast,
Or like my pigeon's throat.

Such pretty colors everywhere !
Such pleasant feelings in the air !
I'm glad as glad can be.
Here, Rover, come, let's take a run,
And catch a good-night from the sun
Behind the maple tree.

Autumn Voices

II

LATE DAYS

How sweetly dies the year,
Serenely lapsing to its last repose!
It flamed with joy when first the end drew near;
Now hushed it sinks into its golden close,
As hearth-fires burning low
Lie still and glow.

I hear our little maid
Sing through the rustling leaves her cheery song.
Her spring-time voice rings out so unafraid,
So like to one that has been silent long,
I shut my eyes to see
If it can be.

The past looks all a dream:
I doubt my joys, and oh! I doubt my grief!
The shadow mingles strangely with the gleam,
And all drops from me like a withered leaf
Blown by celestial wind
Far, far behind.

Now there remains a rest;
And, warmly wrapped within this filmy haze,
That spreads its yellow net across the west,
Upon the sweet receding year I gaze
And feel the tender peace
Of days that cease.

Autumn Voices

Slowly the colors burn :

 Their glowing hearts must fall to ashen brown,
And flicker out and into shadows turn ;

 But then the gentle snow will flutter down,
 A soft, white sleep will fall,
 And cover all —

That long, long, quiet sleep

 That falls upon all death from out the sky.
Heaven tenderly our fallen leaves will keep ;

 They do not die, they only seem to die.

 So pray I it may be
 With me, with me.

XXXI

THE YEAR'S GOAL

REST thee awhile to-night, my soul,
Turn from the dusty road aside,
Nor think to look beyond the goal
Where dim to-morrows hide.

Sweet is this wayside resting-place
Upon the margin of the year;
Avail thee, then, of pilgrim grace
And rest a little here.

Lay down thy burden and thy staff,
Breathe deep and free thee of the past,
Stoop to the springs of time and quaff
These moments while they last.

Feel the fresh wind that comes from yon,
Blown from a neighboring land unknown;
Yet haste thee not, but wait upon
A morrow not thine own.

Thank God he gives no endless way,
But lays his hand across the road,
Calls many a halt, and bids thee stay
And rest thee of thy load.

The Year's Goal

He is too full of grace to deal
A breathless road that never swerves ;
But all things turn and pause and wheel,
In restful, joyful curves.

Days end and turn where nights begin ;
The months whirl round through snow and
glow,
And lay their lesser rings within
The year's encircling flow.

And through these phases manifold,
Round its glad circuit wings the year ;
And links the old, the new, the old,
Within its clasping sphere.

And half we feel the sweep of time
Catch up the years and hurry by ;
But thought falls back, too faint to climb
The circles of the sky.

Dream, if thou wilt, of outmost reach,
The motion of sublimer rounds,
The flight of hopes surpassing speech
And life that knows no bounds ;

But 'mid these orbits dim and great,
Lose not, my soul, the year's embrace,
Its closeness to thy low estate,
Its needful resting-place.

XXXII

THE WATCHER'S CAROL

HIGH and low, to and fro,
Suddenly the bells are ringing,
Sweetest news to mortals bringing.
Though no other sign may show
That the blessed morn doth break,
Wake! Wake!
For Jesus' sake.

Far or near, soft or clear,
Come no strains of heavenly story,
Mighty choirs in beams of glory
Singing songs of holy cheer.
Yet the blessed morn doth break;
Wake! Wake!
For Jesus' sake.

Not a star, near or far,
Shows the way in golden traces.
All the stars are in their places,
Very high and still they are.
Yet the blessed morn doth break;
Wake! Wake!
For Jesus' sake.

The Watcher's Carol

Child, divine! Thyself the sign!
Other signs we do surrender;
Thou, our star of heavenly splendor,
Provest all when thou dost shine!
Wake! The blessed morn doth break;
Wake! Wake!
For Jesus' sake!

XXXIII

FROM MORN TO EVE

A CHILD'S HYMN

THE dawning light puts out the night,
The day arises fair and bright :
Awake, my heart, his praises sing
Who doth the morning freshness bring.
Awake, my heart! Awake, my heart!
Praise him for life and light.

In work and play, the happy day
Climbs swiftly up its shining way :
Then lift, my heart, thy noonday song,
Praise him who makes the day so strong.
Rejoice, my heart! Rejoice, my heart!
Praise him for light and might.

But when the sun his race has run,
And all thy work and play is done,
And stars shine down upon thy nest,
Sing softly then within my breast,
Lie low, my heart! Lie low, my heart!
Praise him for night and rest.

XXXIV

THE SHADOW

THE village churchyard lay in the light
Of the moon that softly shed,
Down from the far mid-heaven of night,
Her silver noon on the dead.

The elm trees hung their branches down,
Heavy with night and sleep ;
The lights were out in the little town
And eyes had forgot to weep.

I stood in a dream, like one upcast
On some long-remembered shore ;
And there in the moonlight lay my past
And all I had wept of yore.

But alas ! it was all more strangely far
Than in thought it had ever been ;
And that grave seemed nearer to yonder star
Than to me, and more akin.

And alas ! alas ! I had lost my tears,
And my heart began to know
How relentless are the effacing years,
How soon it is long ago.

The Shadow

I could not weep, and I could not pray,
Till the shadow behind the stone
Began to lengthen away, away,
Seeking the far unknown.

On the grave it laid, and upon my thought,
The touch of eternity;
It brought what nothing before had brought,
A thrill and my tears to me.

XXXV

HIDDEN JOY

THROUGH leafy by-paths, sheltered and apart,
Whistling the carol of a careless heart,
In idle gladness strolled a truant boy.

Up in a tree-top swayed a little bird,
And sang and sang, nor cared if any heard
His solitary roundelay of joy.

A brook flowed through the silence of a wood;
Some gorgeous flowers upon its margin stood,
And waved their scarlet banners of delight.

From midnight's dusky blue shone out a star,
And through the darkness trailed its splendor far,
Though all the world was buried in the night.

Joy asks no seeing eye, nor listening ear;
But carols, blooms and shines when none is near,
Only because it feels so fully blest.

The mated bird flies not on open wing,
But sings from out the bough, and so I sing
The happy secret hidden in my breast.

XXXVI

RELENTING

THE earth is in a melting mood
This morning of the year ;
And clasped around by mists that brood,
She smiles to find herself so wooed,
With, now and then, a tear.

The topmost fastness of the hill
Has let the winter go ;
The happy-hearted little rill
No longer shivers past the mill
To meadows hushed with snow.

The birds let fall their new-born dreams
Upon me from above ;
And many a shadow wed with beams,
And many a wind-kissed blossom seems
To say a word for love.

What is there in this tender air
To thrill me like a dart ?
It quickens places poor and bare,
And every covert sweet and fair,
Except one maiden's heart.

Relenting

O, are such changeful gleams of light
 Made only to beguile?
Then, I am but a foolish wight
To be so glad because, last night,
 She blessed me with a smile.

But O, when ice and snow relent,
 And every coldest thing;
Might not, perchance, one more repent,
And melting into warm consent,
 Flood all my heart with Spring?

XXXVII

TWO SONGS

[FROM THE GERMAN OF HEINRICH HEINE]

I

My heart, my heart is heavy,
But gayly glances the May;
I stand and lean on the linden,
High up on the bastion gray.

The city's moat below me
Flows still and blue as the sky;
A boy on its sleepy current,
Goes fishing and whistling by.

On the smiling landscape yonder,
In fairy and motley array,
Are oxen and meadow and woodland
And gardens and children at play.

The maidens, at their bleaching,
On the greensward go and come;
The mill-wheel scatters jewels,
I hear its distant hum.

Up on the old gray tower
A sentry-box shows brown;
A tall red-coated fellow
Goes marching up and down.

Two Songs

He trifles with his musket,
That shines in the sunlight red ;
He presents it and he shoulders,—
I wish he would shoot me dead !

II

They have, indeed, tormented
And maddened me with fate ;
Some with their love have done it,
And others with their hate.

With wine they've mingled poison,
And with the bread I ate ;
Some with their love have done it,
And others with their hate.

But she, who more than any
Can torture, wound, and move,
Is she that does not hate me,
And yet that does not love.

XXXVIII

THE CHRISTMAS DOOR

ALL the year long the moon gives light,
And makes a silver day of night ;
 But once a year
 She seems more near,—
Shows every night her steadfast face,
And fills the sky with tranquil grace.
'Tis hard to tell when day is done,
For day and night flow into one.

So Heaven shines downward all the while,
And lights us with its constant smile ;
 But once a year
 It draws more near :
Wide open stands the shining door,
With gleams of light unseen before ;
And all across flash glimpses fleet
Of upper joys and radiant feet.

The Christmas Door

'Tis ever so since love broke through,
And down the widening spaces flew;
That blessed year
Our Lord came near;
For him swung back the starry bound;
Deepened far up the great profound;
All Heaven swept outward at his birth,
And naught was narrow but the earth!

Now evermore he stands and waits
Some lifting of these lower gates;
But once a year
He waits more near:
Shall the blest door be thrown so wide,
And only we the entrance hide?
Unbar our hearts, make room within,
And let the holy Christmas in!

XXXIX

HORIZONS

My heart gives thanks for yonder hill
That makes this valley safe and still ;
That shuts from sight my onward way,
And sets a limit to my day ;
That keeps my thoughts, so tired and weak,
From seeking what they should not seek.
On that fair bound across the west,
My eyes find pasturage and rest,
And of its dewy stillness drink,
As do the stars upon its brink ;
It shields me from the day to come,
And makes the present hour my home.

Deeper will be my rest to-night
For this near calmness of the height ;
Its steadfast boundary will keep
My harbored spirit while I sleep ;
Yet somewhere on its wooded sides
To-morrow's onward pathway hides,
And I shall wake at early morn
To find a world beyond, new-born.

Horizons

I thank thee, Lord, that thou dost lay
These near horizons on my way.
If I could all my journey see,
There were no charm of mystery,
No veiled grief, no changes sweet,
No restful sense of tasks complete.
I thank thee for the hills, the night,
For every barrier to my sight ;
For every turn that blinds my eyes
To coming pain or glad surprise ;
For every bound thou settest nigh
To make me look more near, more high ;
For mysteries too great to know ;
For every thing thou dost not show.
Upon thy limits rests my heart ;
Its safe horizon, Lord, thou art.

XL

THE GOLDEN PRIME

“— the golden prime of this sweet prince.”

NEVER so fair a May was seen,
 Never an evening half so fair ;
Then first I knew what Maytimes mean,
 First deeply breathed the vernal air,
First looked through Nature's sylvan screen,
And saw herself in robe of green.

The breathing dusk, the dreaming sky,
 Were with a thousand meanings fraught ;
But all my thoughts were scented by
 The sweetness of a single thought.
Wide flew my heart, yet circled nigh,
As happy swallows wheel and fly.

The world, for me, was newly made,
 And given unto my heart for food ;
And scent and blossom, bud and blade,
 Were in its waking understood.
All things the inward mood obeyed,
For life its spell upon them laid.

The Golden Prime

Behind the budding sycamore
I saw the new moon's golden boat,
Without a sail, without an oar,
Adown the leafy lattice float,
And touch the ether's rosy shore.
Never was moon so new before.

Nor far, Love's star looked trembling through,
As if but then it learned to shine;
And Love's first smiles shone heavenly true,
They were so newly, freshly mine.
And in that hour my soul outgrew
Itself, and found itself anew.

XLI

DELAY

TASTE the sweetness of delaying,
Till the hour shall come for saying
 That I love you with my soul :
Have you never thought your heart
Finds a something in the part,
 It would miss from out the whole ?

In this rosebud you have given,
Sleeps that perfect rose of heaven
 That in Fancy's garden blows :
Wake it not by touch or sound,
Lest perchance 'twere lost, not found,
 In the opening of the rose.

Dear to me is this reflection,
Of a fair and far perfection,
 Shining through a veil undrawn :
Ask no question then of fate ;
Yet a little longer wait
 In the beauty of the dawn.

Through our mornings, veiled and tender,
Shines a day of golden splendor,
 Never yet fulfilled by day :
Ah ! if love be made complete,
Will it, can it, be so sweet
 As this ever sweet delay ?

XLII

A SURMISE

OUR mortal day breaks from the great unseen.
Whither once more it darkly vanisheth ;
Two shadowy goals with faltering steps between,—
O, tell me, which is life, and which is death ?

Nor is this but an idle questioning ;
At every step we cross some dark surprise,
For life and death are what the moments bring,
And we must know them through their strange
disguise.

Joys we shall have that blossomed in the shade,
And griefs that out of sweetest dreams awoke ;
Doubts that grow clear, and certainties that fade ;
A weary crown, a light and easy yoke.

Wrongs we shall see made servants of the right ;
The noblest victories won by those that fail ;
Great hearts that triumph, falling in the fight ; —
Death hand to hand with life, behind the veil !

Thus evermore we must our pathway thread,
'Mid lights that beckon, shadows that dismay ;
Till the bewildered heart, so strangely led,
Wonders if life or death shall win the day,

A Surmise

As one might wonder, waking from a swoon,
And seeing the far horizon half alight,—
Is it the morning broadening to the noon?
Or is it evening sinking into night?

Or as one standing on the silent shore
If it be ebb or flow can scarcely guess;
Whether the lesser flowing to the more,
Or but the greater lapsing to the less.

O shrouded mystery! the baffled soul,
Long coasting round thy solemn boundaries,
Divines the rounded brightness of the whole,
That first must wane upon these mortal skies.

The tide, when it lays bare the lonely strand,
But lifts more high the great mid-depths of sea:
Does death work life? Does losing fill the hand?
Does darkness feed the light that is to be?

O, then it is no longer life and death,
But life and life, in ever-circling light!
Then ebb and flow of fortune or of breath
Are equal tides that lift us to our height!

W 13



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Sept. 2009

Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



WERT
BOOKBINDING
Grantville Pa
Nov Dec 1988
We're Quality Bound

